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ABSTRACT

Gerald H. Read's interest in international education began as a child and was fostered by the artifacts collected by his father in his travels throughout Asia. He organized his first study tour abroad while he was a senior at Kent State University (Ohio) in 1936. In 1955, a group of educators who were interested in tours abroad for the purposes of comparative education asked William W. Brickman and Read to become directors of an informal organization to sponsor trips abroad. The Comparative Education Society was formally established in 1956, and the first tour was taken during that year. About 40 U.S. educators visited six European countries in a comparative education venture. The trip was successful and there was a great demand for more such ventures. The Ford Foundation underwrote a series of seminars in the USSR, the first of which occurred during September, 1958. The "Comparative Education Review" was published in 1957 and helped to establish contacts with educators throughout the world. At the present time there are comparative education societies in Korea, Japan, Canada, England, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, India, and Australia. To continue the interest in international education, the income from the Gerald H. Read Endowed Chair at Kent State University is used to invite professors from other countries to the campus. This paper is a transcript of a taped interview with Dr. Read. (SM)

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GERALD H. READ AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOUR AND SEMINAR PROGRAMS*

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A Conversation with Gerald H. Read

Note: John F. Ohles, Kent State University, conducted a taped interview with Dr. Read, the transcript of which has been edited for length and clarity.

Ohles: Dr. Read, my understanding is that your association with Kent State University has been a very long one.

Read: I have been here since 1943.

O: And previous to that you were a student at Kent State?

R: I graduated in 1936, was an Ohio Scholar at Ohio State University in 1937-38, and served as principal of the Tallmadge (Ohio) Junior High School from 1938 to 1941. I taught Spanish at Perrysbury (Ohio) High School in 1941-42 and returned to Ohio State as an Ohio Scholar in 1942-43. Then I came to Kent State.

O: It appears that your interest in international education began at an early stage. Could you explain that to us?

R: My father had traveled throughout Asia, primarily to the Philippines, and had been in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. So, we were surrounded by all kinds of objects and pictures at home that excited my interest in things international. When I was a senior at Kent State, I organized and directed a field trip to Cuba in 1936; that was my first venture. Out of that came an interest in Cuban education which was the subject of my master's thesis. This was a history of Cuban education; it was followed by my dissertation on the civic-military role in education under Batista.

O: Then, after you were employed at Kent State, you became interested and involved in tour groups studying comparative education.

R: In the early 1950s following World War II, William W. Brickman had been a student of Isaac Kandel, who had pioneered and developed comparative education in the United States as a professor at Columbia University. Brickman took over the editorship of School and Society, a journal which Kandel had published,

and in that tradition he tried to revive an interest in comparative education. During the war there hadn't really been much activity in the field of comparative education, so Brickman, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, sponsored a series of conferences at New York University. Also, professors of education met in conjunction with the American Association of School Administrators meeting in Atlantic City, because in those days college professors met with school superintendents at their annual meetings. Some of these meetings featured international themes.

Growing out of the meetings at Atlantic City and the comparative education conferences at New York University, a number of professors in education requested that a seminar be planned with visits to European schools and meetings with professors in the universities. Many of our professors had been to Europe under war conditions but they had not met European educators and administrators. They really didn't have many contacts with their European counterparts. Some of the professors were also interested in the history of education, so they thought it would be well to have a seminar which would combine comparative education and history. The program called for visits to where Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, John Amos Comenius, Erasmus, and others lived and worked. So Brickman, having had close contact with European educators and having traveled in Europe, was asked to establish contacts and develop a seminar program. He protested that he didn't like the administrative-organizational aspect of it, and I was given the responsibility of working with him. Brickman became the academic director and I, the administrative director. That's how it all started.

In 1955, Brickman wrote to his professorial friends in Europe and asked if they would cooperate in arranging a seminar for us. When he received positive responses, he made a trip on his own to Europe and met with these people. The first tour took place in 1956. About forty American educators, mostly professors (a few were women,

but most were men), participated in this first comparative education venture. We visited France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Denmark, and England. It was a great success.

The suggestion was made that we should form a society, because when Brickman had gone to Europe they said, "Well, who is sponsoring this?" He replied, "A group of educators." We had a meeting in May 1956, just before we left for the seminar, and the Comparative Education Society was established. Actually, the Comparative Education Society was formed as an organization to sponsor seminars and study tours.

When we returned from that first seminar, there was an immediate demand for another. We were invited to an international conference in Tokyo, which was sponsored by the Japan Research Institute. They asked us to bring over a group to tour Japan and make contacts with Japanese educators. Since I was in contact with the Japanese authorities, I took the initiative in organizing the tour. Again, Brickman served as academic director and I, the administrative director. We visited Tokyo for a conference on moral education followed by seminars at Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Shimane University in Matsue, and Kyoto University. Masunori Hiratsuka, soon to become one of the leading Japanese educators, was quite prominent at that time as a professor at Kyushu University. At our initiative, he formed a comparative education society in Japan.

In the mid-1950s we contacted the Soviet educators, because many of our colleagues were telling us how little they really knew about education in the Soviet Union. We had just passed through the period of McCarthyism and, although George Counts had been writing about the theory of Soviet education, we really didn't have any recent first-hand accounts. I was asked by the Ford Foundation to establish contacts with various Soviet educators through the cultural attache at the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

In the fall of 1957, Brickman and I received an invitation to visit the Soviet Union to meet with their educators. We were received in December 1957 in Moscow by a representative of the trade union of teachers. The union immediately took charge of our visit. It soon became evident that the trade union was officially designated by the Soviets as their professional organization to establish relations with educators of the United States. We visited the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Moscow. We proceeded to Leningrad, met the educators there, and then returned to Moscow. At that time, Llewellyn Thompson was the American ambassador. He encouraged us to negotiate an agreement for the exchange of delegations, exchange of professional materials, and sponsorship of academic seminars. In turn, we indicated our willingness to receive their delegations and to sponsor seminars in the United States for Soviet educators. As a result of this, an agreement was concluded with the assistance of Thompson and his staff at the Embassy.

When we returned to New York City, we were met by reporters and representatives of our State Department from Washington. The latter were very angry because they had been negotiating from Washington and felt we had undercut their efforts. We then explained that Llewellyn Thompson had advised us to sign the agreement. We were asked to go to Washington to meet with members of the Department of State and others who were concerned by our exchange. We did not attend this meeting until February of 1958.

Besides representatives of the State Department, we met with Oliver Cromwell, of the U.S. Office of Education, who was in the process of trying to negotiate an agreement between the Soviet Union and the Office of Education. His negotiations had been stalled as a result of our signed agreement and he was very upset. Also present was John Miles, the director of the International Department of the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce, and William G. Carr of the National Education Association, who was very concerned because we had signed an agreement with the Communist trade union of teachers. He believed that this organization was opposed to the free labor movement, that we had undercut the free labor principle by signing the agreement. In any event, we made it clear that we had the approval of Ambassador Thompson and that we were going to proceed with a seminar in the Soviet Union which would be sponsored by the Comparative Education Society and the Ford Foundation.

The Ford Foundation had agreed to underwrite a series of seminars in the USSR and I was named the project director. The first seminar group, most of whom were university professors, went to the Soviet Union in September 1958. In those days, American universities did not start until the end of September, so it meant that for the whole month of September our people could visit Soviet classrooms and meet teachers and professors.

The Ford Foundation project required the participants to record their seminar experiences. It took about a year to put the report together; it was published by Houghton-Mifflin in 1960 under the title of The Changing Soviet School. We soon learned that there were many errors and omissions in the book. It was put together in a hurry; our contributors really did not know too much about Soviet education. When we returned to the Soviet Union in 1960, after the book was published, we were publicly denounced by Vladimir Veikshan of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences Institute of the History of Education. However, Nicholai Goncharov, vice-president of the academy, softened the indictment by saying that this was not an official denunciation. It was only an expression of Soviet disappointment with the book. He said that our delegations would be welcome to come to the Soviet Union, but he did wish that we would revise and correct some of the errors and provocative

interpretations. Our response was that we were open to receiving their corrections but our value judgments probably would never be accepted by them. In the spirit of peaceful coexistence, we hoped these were differences that we could learn to live with. Therefore, we would carry on the seminars and the open dialogues in the hope of refining judgments and eliminating some of the distortions and misinterpretations on both sides. In 1961 we initiated a series of seminars in November and still later during the holiday season. For a few years we sponsored groups in March; all of these were in addition to the seminars during the summer vacation. For years, then, we averaged three or four seminars a year in the Soviet Union.

In the meantime, other nations organized comparative education societies; the Europeans, the Canadians, and the Japanese. The Comparative Education Review was first published in 1957. At one of the meetings we had at New York University, it was suggested that the society should sponsor a journal. Harold Benjamin was very interested in comparative education and he contributed $500 to initiate the publication. George Bereday, professor of comparative education at Columbia University, was named the editor and I accepted the business editorship. I had become secretary/treasurer of the Comparative Education Society in 1956.

The Review brought us into contact with many educators throughout the world. The society received invitations to have seminars in many countries: in South America, Africa, the Near East, the Far East, and in all parts of Europe. Soon we visited all the continents. Interest in comparative education has been popularized throughout the world; at the present time there are societies in Korea, Japan, Canada, England, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, India, and Australia. In the late 1960s Joseph Katz of the University of British Columbia (Canada) initiated the first World Congress of the Comparative Education Societies; various

people contributed money to make it possible, but it was the Canadian government that made it financially possible. At this first congress was formed the International Council of Comparative Education Societies and it was agreed to have a world congress every three years. The question arose as to where the secretariat should be located. Canada was very interested in having it there, but it was decided to locate the secretariat under Pedro Rusello at the International Institute of Education in Geneva, Switzerland. The second congress was held in Geneva three years later, then one in London, and the last one in Tokyo. The next congress will be in Paris in 1984.

O: You have cooperated with Phi Delta Kappa in a series of educational tours. Would you discuss how this was initiated?

R: In the 1960s I served as a member of the Phi Delta Kappa Commission on International Education. The commission did much to contribute to popularizing an interest in international education among American educators. It published a number of manuscripts and The Kappan featured several special issues devoted to international education. Phi Delta Kappa co-sponsored with the Comparative Education Society its first seminar in the Soviet Union in March 1961 with Stanley Elam serving as associate director with me. In those days airline fares were relatively cheap and school administrators granted two-week professional leaves of absence for teachers to participate in seminars during the academic year. It was not until the mid-1970s that it became increasingly difficult for teachers to be freed from classroom duties and for this reason the Russian Winter Festival became a popular program during the Christmas vacation. The Soviet schools usually are in session until about three or four days before New Year's; this means that our teachers have an opportunity to visit Soviet schools. Although Soviet schools are on vacation, we sponsor summer seminar meetings with school administrators and professors.

Our contacts with China opened in 1973 when I was invited to the People's Republic of China as an advisor to the Ethiopian government. At that time Haile Selassie was the leader of the Third World and the Chinese decided that they should receive more delegations from Africa and South America. They invited Ethiopian Airlines to develop plane service to Peking and Shanghai from Addis Ababa, with South American delegations landing in Dakar and then flying to China via Addis Ababa. The Comparative Education Society had many seminars at Haile Selassie University. It was suggested that I instruct the airline personnel in organizing the delegations that would be flown to China. So I was invited to fly with the royal family to China in 1973. The Ethiopean pilots were scheduled to land in various cities in China to familiarize themselves with their airport facilities. If Shanghai and Peking were closed, then they could land in Canton, Nanking, Wuhan, or some other alternative airport. We had several meetings with Chou En-Lai and I met many Chinese educators.

I directed the first group of Americans to China in March 1974; this delegation was sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa. The group was given seven days of orientation in Ethiopia together with meetings with Ethiopian educators. Then in 1975, I was granted a quota of visas to allocate to educational societies and universities of the United States. Some of the organizations which have sponsored China tours are Pi Lamba Theta, Kappa Delta Pi, Phi Delta Kappa, National Council for the Social Studies, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, Delta Kappa Gamma, and the National School Boards Association. Some thirty universities have sponsored our China tours. Two professors at the Peking Normal University were sent by the Ministry of Education to pursue graduate studies at Kent State University. Phi Delta Kappa sponsored them as featured speakers in various conferences all over the United States for some two years. In turn, they met with many American educators and became acquainted with our schools and

universities in many states. Now they have returned to their research institute at Peking Normal University.

Our study tours and seminars will continue but will be fewer in number. In addition to the Soviet Union and China, we like to go to places that have not had many contacts with American educators. In 1982 we visited Ladakh, Sikkim, and Bhutan, small border areas of northern India. Phi Delta Kappa will continue to develop its international tour-seminar programs and eventually it will establish its own center for international education.

O: Do you have credit seminars at Kent State?

R: Not now. We encourage other universities to offer credit for the seminars. Peter Hackett at the University of Virginia has directed many of our seminars and he has off-campus credit courses. If teachers need credit for salary increases or for establishing tenure, we make it available through many of the sponsoring universities.

O: Here at Kent State you established the Center for the Study of Sosialist Education. Would you tell us about this?

R: There were a number of reasons for establishing the Center for the Study of Socialist Education at Kent State University. The U.S. State Department made grants to me to bring East European educators to the United States. During the 1950s and 1960s East European and Soviet educators could not accept invitations from our State Department but they could respond if the invitations came from a university. As a result, the Center for the Study of Socialist Education was established. First, delegations of professors, teachers, and researchers were brought from Czechoslovakia, then Hungary, Poland, Romania, and East Germany. Some Americans were opposed to this. The American Federation of Labor, under the leadership of George Meany, took the position that the U.S. should have no contacts with trade unions in communist countries. The center took the position

that a dialogue ought to be maintained. So the first delegations of socialist trade unions of teachers to come to the United States were scheduled and directed by the center. William Carr, secretary of the National Education Association, also opposed these contacts with the socialist trade unions of teachers.

O: Would you tell us about the Gerald H. Read Endowed Chair here at Kent State?

R: As we carried out many of these projects, instead of allocating to the College of Education the overhead charges, we deposited this money with the Kent State University Foundation as an endowment to subsidize comparative and international education programs of the College of Education. When I retired, an endowed chair was established; the income has been used to invite professors to the campus to continue an international education program. Kim Sebaly now coordinates the activities of the endowed chair for the College of Education.

O: I wonder if we can retrace our steps a little. Could you tell us about the people who were involved in the organization of the Comparative Education Society?

R: In the United States there is William W. Brickman, who in the 1950s was the editor of School and Society and was a professor at New York University and later at the University of Pennsylvania. I think, perhaps, Brickman, more than anyone else provided the leadership to establish the Comparative Education Society. George Bereday, as editor of the Comparative Education Review, made a significant contribution. Claude A. Eggertsen, at the University of Michigan, trained more doctoral students in international education than any other professor in the United States. He has been very active in the society over the years. C. Arnold Anderson, as a sociologist, was invited to the University of Chicago to develop comparative education. Joseph Katz, the University of British Columbia, was involved from the very beginning. William Johnson, at the University of Pittsburgh, devoted his efforts to the history of Soviet education and was also very active in

the society. Isaac Thut, of the University of Connecticut, was one of the pioneers in forming the society, as was Robert Sutton of Ohio State University. A young professor, Michael Chiapetta, participated in our first seminar to Europe and has been very active in the society over the years; others were Victor Kelly, University of Arizona, and Robert Belding, University of Iowa. Franklin Parker and Stewart Fraser later became active in comparative education; Harold Noah and Andreas Kazamais made significant contributions in editing the Comparative Education Review.

O: What about people with whom you became acquainted in, for example, the United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and other foreign countries; would you comment on some of these people?

R: Brian Holmes, University of London, was a young student of Joseph Lauwreys and Nicholas Hans, the grand old men of comparative education in Great Britain. Hans was much older than Lauwreys. Brian Holmes has since assumed the chair of comparative education at the University of London. Edmund J. King, the University of London, has written many books on comparative education. Also well known in England in comparative education were Charles H. Dobinson and Vernon Mallinson at Reading University and William Halls at Oxford University. These men were very active in the American and British societies of comparative education. They have cooperated very closely with us over the years in our seminars in Europe.

In the early days we had many contacts in Germany, such as Franz Hilker, who then lived in Bonn; Erich Hylla, who had completed a monumental work in comparative education just before the war; and Friedrich Schneider and his son, who later gave leadership to German education. There was also Robert Ulich;

later he came to Harvard University and became well known in the history of education. Walter Schultz at Frankfurt and Gerhard Hausman at Hamburg were very active in conducting seminars for our visiting American teachers and professors.

Philip J. Idenburg in Holland was one of the grand old men of comparative education. Later, one of his students, Elzo Velema, worked very closely with us in our seminars. In Sweden Torsten Husén later made his mark in comparative international measurement in education. Sexton Markland, who was in the Ministry of Education, is now at the University of Stockholm. In Italy Luigi Volpocelli Borgi was very much interested in comparative education.

In the USSR, our first contacts were with Ivan Grivkov, president of the Trade Union of Teachers, along with Vladimir Veikshon, a specialist in the history of education at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and Nikolai Goncharov, vice president of the Academy. In the 1960s my closest professorial friends were vice president of the Academy, Victor Zubov, as well as Zoya Malkova, director of the Institute of General Pedagogy, and Zoya Zarubina, dean of the Institute of Foreign Languages.

Robert J. Havighurst, the University of Chicago, was a sociologist with an interest in comparative education who cooperated with us over the years when he was a consultant in Brazil. Anisio Teixara was one of the leading men in the Ministry of Education in Brazil and later president of the University at Brasilia. At the University of Chile, Irma Salas was the most outstanding woman educator in comparative education in Latin America. In South Africa, R. G. MacMillan was one of the leaders in comparative education who kept in contact with us. We had several seminars in South Africa under his auspices and we had many seminars in New Zealand and Australia assisted by K. R. Minogue at the University of Aukland and W. F. Connell at the University of Sydney. In Thailand we had good relations and many seminars, largely through the Secretary of Education, Bhun Thin, and his assistant, Opal Wahta. Then in Japan, Masunori Hiratsuka, director of the Institute

of Educational Research in Tokyo, was always very helpful. Probably the most delightful seminars were directed by Kunyushi Obara at Tamagawa University which really started with a kindergarten and extended through the graduate school. Obara was called the "John Dewey" of Japanese education.

O: Then one last question. Looking over these more than twenty-five years, would you give us an appraisal of the work you have engaged in and the influence it has had on American and international education?

R: Well, I think we helped to popularize international and comparative education through the activities of the Comparative Education Society, the publication of the Review, and through the many study tours and seminars. After World War II there was a feeling that we were much too isolated and ignorant of other people and educators of the world. There was an interest in things international during that period. Large numbers of foreign students came to the United States for the first time. They were well received and they contributed to this interest in comparative education. Many of our young people joined the Peace Corps and returned to further this international dimension in American education. With the coming of the 1970s, the Vietnam War, Soviet adventurism, inflation, and now the economic recession, I think many of our people have become turned off internationally, especially with communist countries. We have entered a period of neo-isolationism. With the high cost of air fares, young educators are finding it difficult to participate in international study tours. So, I think we are entering a period in which comparative education will be much less popular and there will be minimal demand for comparative education coursework. Our colleges of education have become highly specialized with the result that there are fewer opportunities to elect courses in comparative education. Consequently, we are finding that educators tend to view their professional problems within a narrow American context.

Many educators feel the international dimension is not really relevant and some are so overwhelmed with their professional problems they do not have the time or interest to refine the international dimension. There has been a demise in foreign language study and, although we poured millions of dollars into teaching foreign languages, instruction has been at an all time low. But there has been one very positive professional outcome that has been lasting, the organizing of international organizations by many of the specialized fields in education. This has brought together practitioners from many countries. Hence the international dimension in education is being continued.